Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please accept the Committee’s joint congratulations on CEDAW’s 40th anniversary as we reiterate our gratitude for your support.

CEDAW provides a universal standard for women's human rights, built on three foundational principles: non-discrimination, state obligation, and substantive equality. Its 16 thematic areas are crucial for development highlighting the synergies between CEDAW and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Over the last 40 years, CEDAW has ensured through the Optional Protocol, ratified by 115 States parties that women have access to justice in line with international human rights principles. Last year, CEDAW addressed 11 individual complaints, finding violations in cases involving obstetric violence, discrimination concerning women’s entitlement to Indian status as First Nation descendants through the maternal line, discrimination gender stereotypes regarding the expected behavior of a rape survivor among others. Since its entry into force, 187 communications have been registered, 42 of which are currently pending. 15 cases are ready for decision, but the Secretariat is unable to increase the number of draft recommendations due to existing constraints. We therefore call for increased and adequately allocated resources on a sustainable basis, to the Committee as well as other treaty bodies dealing with individual communications to produce a higher number of draft recommendations for adoption to avoid delays, address the backlog, and close the protection gap.

A total of 8 Enquiries have been undertaken, and currently it takes 7 years from the time a complaint is received till the Inquiry report is issued which is regrettable as this procedure relates to grave or systematic violations of human rights which need to be addressed expeditiously. Currently, only one Inquiry can be undertaken per year even though we have had situations where more than one state had accepted a request for a visit for a year. The lengthy communication process and meetings between the Secretariat and the Permanent Missions contribute to the delays.

The Committee has elaborated 38 General Recommendations, with an impending 39th on the rights of indigenous women and girls, which provide elaboration and guidance to States parties on the implementation of their obligations regarding specific articles of or issues arising under the Convention.

The Committee continues to be concerned at the anti-rights pushback, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which relegated millions of women and girls from work or school into domestic roles. We continue to witness a rise of conservative narratives, a renewed emphasis on traditional values and attacks against the so-called “gender ideology”.

On 8 March, the Committee together with other independent women’s rights mechanisms issued a statement calling on “the international community, first and foremost States, to reaffirm the existing legal frameworks and to allocate greater efforts towards their effective implementation in order not to erode the established rights that these frameworks protect.” The Committee acknowledges increased recognition of and compliance by States parties with the OP CEDAW and its Views and recommendations, including by providing adequate compensation to women victims. States parties’ increasing willingness to provide for internal mechanisms to ensure compliance with international human rights norms, including the CEDAW Convention, is also appreciated. The Committee iterates the importance of the Optional Protocol in providing the bridge between women’s rights and their actualization, and count on your support.

Thank you.